

SCOTT McCLLOUD • DC'S WHO'S WHO ARTISTS

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AMAZING HEROES

DESTROY!!





"IT'S ABOUT A GUY THAT'S DEAD."

STIG'S INFERNO!

by TY TEMPLETON

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"What do you mean you haven't tried it yet?"

from  ECLIPSE COMICS

134 AND © 1998 Ty Templeton

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OUR COVER: Scott McCloud gives his two excitement-maximizing characters in this cover. Call us by ECLIPSE! Inspiration by Steve Meyers! All this is copyright © 1987 Silver Linings

EDITORIAL

KIM THOMPSON

The news was awaited in three days flat by Popsi White and me, so if there's anything wrong with it, bear in mind that it's a miracle that I made it into your hands. Crissled between the Christmas season and the *Perseus Special*, the last couple weeks have been tough. I'm pretty sure that within the next year you'll regret, minus a lot of addictive diet, everything will get better.

I was going to go on to talk about the difficulties of putting out a magazine on a semi-monthly basis (I once had a great headline for the editorial, "Gimme Tough") but thought enough. Let's just do it, and stop talking about it.

The one big casualty of the accelerated schedule was "2 Hg. Speed," which we just plain didn't have time to assemble. The thing is a pain in the neck anyway, and it was never done in any real sense. (If the Reader's Service notes contain a note indicating it, it's going early.) Don't think you're getting shortchanged, though—in actual fact, this is a pretty hefty issue of *Amazing Heroes* in terms of editorial material, with a preview, an interview, four columns, and three feature articles, as well as the semi-cherished story. (An editorial, too, although no real content that because it was obviously written in about five minutes.) Let's not forget *Amazing* or *Four Color* material that continues to cover pretty rates.

Just a quick message to all those people who are still buying all those awful things and asking special prices. CUT IT OUT ALREADY! THE STUFF IS CHEAP! WHY ARE YOU SPENDING YOUR INDOLENT ON THIS GARBAGE? That was our editorial comment for the year.

I'm especially happy to welcome my old pal Dwight H. Decker back as a regular contributor to *Amazing Heroes*, with his double-adultulation "Don't Bother!" no less. Dwight is one of those fellows where interesting is matter what he talks about, something I hope he'll prove again and again. Now we can talk about wrestling, so H's recently moving to the challenge.

One of the upcoming issues of *Marvel's Discs* is *Amazing Heroes*, by the way, features a special 36-page story written and drawn by some colorist than Don Rosa, master of the "Inkblotting Contest." Those who're following Don's lines now comes over the years with "Return to the Future." "Captain Kominsky" is also what a terrific experience he is, and it's great to see him finally find his niche. So, should be reading Don's stories anyway, but if you aren't, pick up Don's *Amazing*, at least.

Next issue, we take a look at Marvel's new *Rules* series, then, as a preview reader, we'll be spotlighting Ty Templeton. Conversely, the *Orion* is an *Amazing Heroes*—and don't forget to order an extra copy of our first *Amazing* *Swamp* issue!

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Story: Boris & Star
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Story: Pat McElroy
Cover: Barry West
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Story: Gordon Derry
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Story: Gordon Derry
Cover: Boris & Star
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A preview of Shogakukan
Story & Art: Boris & Star
Plus a preview of The Shogakukan
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The Whopper, a pop-in-the-mid, depicts the legend of the Emerson Mask.
Story: Rick Rodolfo
Cover: Rodolfo & Lee
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BLIP AND THE COAGS #1

It's all over! Blip and the Coags are finally out with super powers, and it's all over! All the Coags are finally out with super powers, and it's all over! All the Coags are finally out with super powers, and it's all over!

Story: Pete Longmire
Cover: Longmire & Pinsky
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But it's not the same! The new Venture is now the old Venture! It's a beautiful new comic. But this is a new comic, and it's not the same! It's a beautiful new comic. But this is a new comic, and it's not the same! It's a beautiful new comic. But this is a new comic, and it's not the same!



THE REALM #1

Alan and company encounter a trio of gods on the way to Nibiru.
Story: Dennis & Star
Cover: Boris & Star
(\$1.50 black-and-white comic, ships in Jan.)

R-MOVIE COMICS

REACTOR-MAN #1

Reactor Man is the middle of an experiment and suddenly changed his location. Reactor Man is the middle of an experiment and suddenly changed his location. Reactor Man is the middle of an experiment and suddenly changed his location.

BLACKTHORNE

BLACKTHORNE 3-IN-1 #2

"Machinist"
Boris & Star search for the Black Wizard who wants to destroy the world and the world.

Story: Mark Wayne Harris
Cover: Nicholas Koenig
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The story of human survivors from the zombie war has a lot of variety!
Story: Robert Kane
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Highland's latest, Alan
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The death of a mortal and
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Art: _____
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Story: _____
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story. Sam's last great day.
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The series of the
Story: _____
Art: _____
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the future of the world.
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The series of the
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THUNDERBOLT'S FURROW

The Thunderbolt's return to the world
and his friends.
Story: _____
Art: _____
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\$2.00 color comic, ships 1/22



"More than a punch in the mouth."

**Making Comics:
An Interview With**

SCOTT!
McCLOUD



McCloud by McCloud

Scott McCloud is serious about comics. In a series of philosophical, satirical, and surreal, McCloud is making highly thoughtful about the medium in which he has chosen to work—since it works, what it can do, and where it's going—at the following will show. Everything he's done—from *Zot* to *DESTROY*—has been comics to the square. So you best believe—that dared to be different, in an industry where being a clone would be the only road to success.

As creators of AN's "Small Press Watch" will recall, McCloud is also a champion of the creative freedom of expression to be found in the world of comic books.

Following his signature path as a free-lance, McCloud has been on the comics scene as *BOB* with *Zot* from Eclipse. Coming at a time when comics were on the verge of collapsing from their own provocations of creation in period which we haven't left behind, the words constantly applied to *Zot* were "a breath of fresh air." Sure, *Zot* had its serious

side, but it was accompanied by an imagination (lighten/combust) and sense of fun which were unlike anything else on the stands. It was also a first volume in the history of comic storytelling. Early, Black, Grosse, Stripes.

Despite winning a Kirby award for Best New Comic and McCloud's helping the Blue Manning Empire as *Blue New Comic*, *Zot* over the one million did not even he could compare. Low sales followed by cancellations. But like McCloud, the Paul

Penner and the Red Bull. McCloud is a hero to be proud. And so *Zot* has, starting in January of 1992, as a black and white comic.

In this space time, McCloud is also a one-man. Stripes. Approximately. Consider—I know two inches, worked on me, as one glimpse of *Phantom* converted me to the voice of the *Apocalypse* God of Comics. Thanks, Scott.

This interview was tape recorded by McCloud and conducted, transcribed, and edited by Paula "The Polar Bear" MacDonnell.

AMAZING HEROES: What have you been doing for the past two years?

McCLOUD: That's a good question. Is it really two years?

AM: Well, maybe it's more like a year and a half, but McCloud: It's an awfully long time. I sat down a couple of months ago and accounted for about 25 per cent of the time. The rest I don't know.

AM: The last 25 per cent.

McCLURE: With *DESTRON*, contrary to reports, didn't take me a whole year to do. Although it was about four months. So there's four. And I spent a lot of time on small pieces, which although it didn't pay the way as at least two or three months well spent. I think, both looking at small press comics and working on enough little comics of my own, only one of which I remember. *Assault*, I don't speak about five months in it doing designs for the Eclipse line, a whole lot of ads, logos and lettering designs which I really enjoyed doing. I've always been interested in that kind of design. I wouldn't want to spend my whole life on it but it was fun for a while.

AM: So you're doing better. **McCLURE:** Not busy enough. I've been busy thinking about *Zot* mostly.

AM: Let's go back to when *Zot* first appeared. **McCLURE:** I stepped into the knowledge that it was going to come back.

McCLURE: This, nobody believed in *Slingshot*. I guess I don't blame them. But *Cin* and *Driss* and I never really had any doubt that we were "bringing *Slingshot*" back. It was just a question of when. Strongly enough I even expected my back then that the new *Zot* would be a *Black* and white, though at the time *Black* and white was pretty unpopular.

AM: Not quite as popular as it is now. **McCLURE:** Yeah.

AM: Well, why did it take so long? **McCLURE:** I've asked myself this a lot, and I've supposed that I still don't have a good answer. All I know is that I didn't sleep. But, if it was possible for me to continue it throughout this whole time, then the vision that I would be drawing right now still wouldn't be half as good as what I am drawing right now. I've learned so much in the last year and a half. I feel as if I went back to school in a strange sort of way. I even gave myself some design classes and now to draw. I learned a lot doing that. I learned a lot doing the designs. I learned as well as that the hundreds of small press artists whose work I became familiar with, and even learned a lot doing *DESTRON*. I learned so much that I think when *Zot* returns I will quickly make up for all the time in the

The last few issues of the new *Zot* take place on Earth.



Introducing a new villain: *Beltos*.

dream to which my art has responded.

AM: I think I know what you mean, especially the part about time-and-again. *A little bit of that suffering brings a dimension of depth to our work doesn't it?*

McCLURE: Oh, it's a great source.

AM: Also much has "Planes" been? **McCLURE:** It's the new *Zot* changed from *Slingshot* when it was supposed to be *Slingshot* coming out right after *Slingshot* a whole year and a half later.

McCLURE: When I was working on *Slingshot*, the original "Planes" was changing up in its mind so much a way that it would have seemed like just a hand unrecognizing of plot elements left over from the first story. I don't think it would have had much identity. But the way "Planes" had changed up now, I think that this first two-part story is so many were going to be the definitive *Zot* story. It was the time for the entire series and so much more complex and has a much stronger identity than it would have if I had done it coming right off of *Slingshot*.

AM: I just sit down and I read the entire thing...well, I didn't have time to sit down and read it because I had to read it on the bus going to and from work.

McCLURE: That's sleep, a lot of good comes get read on the bus. *Black*, and it was really—don't take this the wrong way—that it was a lot better than I remembered it even. I really enjoyed it, reading it all in one sitting made it jump together so much better.

McCLURE: I've found that as people are expected to read our stuff they're never open in discussing the old stuff. It's wonderful. I feel as if I'm really clearing house. People are feeling much more open about discussing the first run because they know that I've left behind a lot of the last successful aspects of the earlier series.

AM: What do you think are the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the original series?

McCLURE: I think the greatest weakness apart from the fact that it was a long time and made beginning's readers—probably the greatest

weakness was that I forgot what it was about. About halfway through the first ten issues of *Zot* I lost all context there, it just wandered off for reasons at a time. The rapid storylines became less and less relevant to the idea of the future. I think a lot much of its sense of purpose because I became too close to it. **AM:** I think for me the thing that was its greatest strength and its greatest weakness, it just struck me today, was on the one hand it had that wonderful sort of humanism that anything could happen on any page, and on the other hand it was also a short-hand because it gave it a kind of *McCLURE:* *Slingshot*—meant?

AM: Well, *Slingshot* seemed a probably a much more, it was a fairly too loose for what it was trying to say, or a little too serious for the way it was being told.

McCLURE: It was unbalanced.

AM: So. **McCLURE:** Of course, don't get me wrong. I still had a lot of the first run. The characteristics could have been a few designers, but I'm still very proud of the variety and value of the

Black and white a different style.





Above: A typical vintage McCloud newspaper. Left: A sample of McCloud art from his book as a fan artist.

went to make it clear that I love nothing against Super Heroes. My whole point is that it results in "bad" art. I wanted it to be that I was not suddenly vindicated. As long as I could tell it didn't have nearly enough mindless violence! So I thought why not try to do the comic book that Super Heroes had a reputation of being and do one that really was mindless violence. So I did *McCloud*!

AB: Now about that small press stuff? Should you get started with that?

McCLURE: I was trying to figure that out myself. I honestly can't remember how I got started with small press.

AB: I guess it just started you in another real story of second youth.

McCLURE: Well, you know where I was getting started in comic book fandom a long time ago, and "No, I got involved as a fanzine."

AB: That's right, you have a past. **McCLURE:** I have a past. He won't work about it a whole lot, because it's really embarrassing. I did fanzine work, the last said the books. Of course like all fanzine artists, I did spot ads for articles in being everybody how great Marvel Comics were, and a few DC comics, and basically that's all we were doing at those times. They really were fanzines, they were magazines done by fans, saying how great other people's comics were. And when I found out that fanzines had changed, as it really has in the last few years, and that a huge number of fans all over the country were making their own comics, rather than just writing about how great other people's were.

I saw this instantly as just being a serious improvement. It's important, having pros at your own work, even if it's not up to the professional levels of comics. I used have something I fantasized the fact that I was a fan at the wrong time. For a short while I practically dedicated myself to comic work again, because I really felt like that. It was a timing up problem. One of my correspondents once noted that I seemed to be going backwards up the ladder of postage by doing small press comics after having my own "big book" come out. But it was the right thing to do because, ultimately, we're all still learning. This was a way of saying to myself, much more than to anyone else, that there was still a place in my art for just screwing around, experimenting, doing exactly what came to mind, and not worrying about sales charts and distribution deals and such, setting it to the down or so people who felt like sending me a book and a stamp. Along the way I became so interested in other small press comics that I thought I'd share some of what I was learning in drawing them for a while, which I did in my one-page column.

AB: These have translated to much. The small press was once the breeding ground.

McCLURE: I would like to see the term small press reserved for comic books which are done for the sake of making comics with little or no profit involved. In which case, a lot of the comics whose people are call-

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A series of panels from the climax of DESTROY, McCloud's tribute to the endless fight scene

ing small press really aren't small press at all.

AM: You couldn't call them the New small press.

McCLURE: Now the New is making its creative a lot amount of money. I'm sure. There's no question that James Dean South and the other fellow care about comics, but I guess what I'm saying is that it's making you a living, well, that's not small press anymore. It's not really a value judgment as much as just a commercial cut off point. If it's big enough to make you a living then it isn't small, simple logic. But I think the reason that the term "small press" has been attached to the pub-

lication Market Says Tariffs generation is that these books were previously the only thing that has done as large was wrong. Most of the real small press comics still weren't being sold by most people, so they assumed that these "small press" thing that they were talking about, well, they had to be somewhere in the shop. "Where are these small press comics we're hearing about?" And all they could find were the ruffies, so these magazines started sweeping up the term as their own. So all a small press comic will mean the comics that people make by giving them to the Xerox shop and getting up to, 25, 30 copies of

them and selling them for two bits and a stamp.

AM: That seems a little guarded about, huh?

McCLURE: No, in fact it's really becoming now. There's nothing more gratifying than seeing a magazine like Tim Corrigan's *Small Press Comics* actually available in the shops. There's a response that only had a circulation of about 200 and now it's more than ten times that.

AM: That's incredible. **McCLURE:** Yeah, I was one of the few hundred. I'm happy to say **AM:** Speaking of small press, how did *2nd AM* come about? More than

book, *Breakfast*. Photographers *Black* and the *new* on the block trying to fight their way out of the pleasure they.

McCLLOUD: It is and that many good books that have been there since the beginning. "The beginning" being three, four years ago. But these books are not beautiful. From the current issue, I know that David Lauder is fairly successful at this, and I can understand why it's beautiful, but I don't know if there is anyone to blame except, although I have heard opinions to the

you compared the worst books of each of these categories. The real quality issue then each genre have also in common and the differences become very significant when you get right down to it.

McCLLOUD: We seem to be on the verge of breakthrough here. In the space of two weeks we saw *Longman* in *People* Magazine and *Amateur* (this one the David Lauder one).

McCLLOUD: *Spengler* just issued a newspaper review in *Rolling Stone*. Inc.



Jerry in the new state.

concern. I don't think any type of comic has a monopoly on quality. The report all types of comics. There's no monopoly, no type is based on nationality of comic that hasn't done anything for me. I think that the best books of each type, the best annual parody books, the best of the slightly older generation of black and white books, all of these things together, would have less significant differences than if

McCLLOUD: Of course, few there was the *McCloud* Express. McCLLOUD: (laughs) That sounds really nice! McCLLOUD: But, but comics are other people and the *McCloud* Express are two buttons to which comics have their getting there, of you know what I mean. I have to just a little bit indicated in the *McCloud* that *Spengler* and *Amateur* (this one, for your age, new thought of in the *Comic* establishment as creators

who are really being the pull are the ones who are making a breakthrough. What do you think of it? I like for this breakthrough in comics.

McCLLOUD: I'm always of the opinion that a leader is ultimately someone who will not follow to think it's only natural that a person like *Spengler* should wind up being at the forefront. Of course, the public is as fickle as always they often they become more of a trend just at that time in ending, so it might be a little more that people are finally catching on to comics. It might mean that we're about to go down the tubes and they'll be all having the correct opinion when we're on our last leg, asking for tickets, but, it's not over yet. The writers of top only very recently realized that comics were not, and that means that we've got another few years in which we're on a large will be gradually catching on. Of course there's the danger that the wrong people will catch on and we'll have a real other sort of self righteous conservatism. I don't think that that's an option that we're having moving from various sources. I sit up and watched the whole *Senate* subcommittee hearing on rock, and that continued me more than anything that if we were ever in a position like that we wouldn't mind a chance. The situation whether this market is in the public eye riding high or just a relatively isolated market, the fact still remains that which the *Wendy* Plan and the *Spengler* and the *McCloud* Brothers and Larry Blumberg, though they can't really count on being awarded for their contributions, this is our country that no matter what happens, you're not going to walk away completely blank. Because after you've done the really good comic books, you might not have a lot of money to show for it, but you will have some really good comic books, and ultimately that's a very tangible reward, much more so than it seems at first. I think we all need to consider what it would be like, though as in positions like the one I'm in right now, to be producing something that you can't sell. It's not that. He had to be a far greater that people make things that they care about, and yet make people don't. Most people make things to make money and that's it. That's the normal. That's the status quo. What I have the privilege of doing right now is something very new, and something very exciting, and without I make money as it is

not, the reward is pretty much guaranteed as long as I stay within my own convictions. Regardless of what shape the market is it will still be the story of three or four people who make it work for themselves first, for a small audience next, and for a large audience on the long run.

McCLLOUD: What do you think the odds are of comic printing reports? McCLLOUD: I've always considered a new comic. Comics have to be designed. I mean about artists, but I never think in terms of something that might couple or something the art form, to the fact that it's purely ridiculous. Comics are such a natural form of expression, they have to survive. I only worry about "how" and "when," but the question of "if" the very idea that comics might not be able to reach their rightful place in terms of public respect, that's just not a concern.

McCLLOUD: Well, I love and *Amateur* continues to be a real joy. *Breakworld* is a really my favorite comic. I think it'll probably still be my favorite when this interview comes out. *Breakworld* is just mind-blowing. I love *Breakworld*!

McCLLOUD: Certainly a world of it. McCLLOUD: It's a marvelous example of what can come out of the small press, one dimensional comic with Larry Blumberg, not with a million as a result. It starts with a person who wants to make a comic.

McCLLOUD: Really. I also enjoy these days. *Blazing* *Garco*, *John* *Garco*, and *Amateur*, of course. *Amateur* is a comic book but it's back on *Blunder*. I really like *Amateur*! Love, putting a big kick out of that. Creative, in whatever form, I've always enjoyed that. It's a whole bunch of small *Amateur*. *Color* they say. *Amateur*, *the Car* *Amateur*, just everything at that book. *Amateur* Oh boy, why do I feel a compulsion to make them all? I've always been like that, I have my guide! *Amateur*! When friends come over I want to go through the comic and find every last thing that they should see. It's not like *Amateur* I love *Amateur*. There's really a lot going on. And a lot of things happening very fast. A lot of good changes. The comics to make. It's like about *Amateur*! It's not to have *Amateur* back.

McCLLOUD: Let's go back to *Amateur* and the change in black and white. I know you're very strong feelings about black and white comics.

McCLLOUD: Yeah, do. McCLLOUD: Because you feel that *Amateur* will be a stronger book in black and white, don't you?

McCLLOUD: I think at this point, yeah. I don't want to put into any sense of saying that black and white is inherently superior to color. It's not, but there are certain things that I want to do with *Amateur* and that I know I can do best in black and white. Black and white I think is a more effective form to deal with stories with a strong emotional content. *Amateur* has a ending off effect, a way of absorbing things. Doing comics in color, at least for me I use color and the way most Americans can color—tends to emphasize the physical forms, you become more aware of volumes and shapes, the external form of things when doing in a color comic. When dealing in black and white, the potential is there to emphasize the meaning of forms beyond the forms themselves.

I haven't all worked out yet, but this is something I've become increasingly certain about. I think that

A series of character sketches by McCloud, including the main heroes and a few new people.



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for the triumphant return of the...

JUSTICE MACHINE

Coming from Comico

The hottest team of 1986
will begin their all-new,
monthly series in '87!



A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR ELITE

Elite Comics was founded as a self-publishing venture with a handshake deal between two friends, Tony Isabella and Mike Gustovich. An auspicious beginning for the small, Malibu-based publisher whose list now consists of a full half-a-dozen titles in various stages of completion.

When Carl Knappe, a malibu surferboy, was approached a little over a year ago by his friend Jim Floyd with the idea of starting a comic company, Knappe was a little taken aback. He hadn't even read a comic book for a number of years and had never conceived the idea of producing one. Floyd's motives were earnest the day, though, for

after a little research, Knappe not only agreed to serve as president of the company (also called Independent Comics), he also ended up creating a back-up series for Independent's first title, *The Golden Rule*.

The first few months of Independent's existence were riddled with such standard small press blocks as overpricing, underfilling, and sporadic distribution. Frustrating as these problems can be, they were

minor irritations compared to the major crisis situation on the first few months that resulted in such significant efforts as people every flowing from character's eyes. Added to this was the discovery that another company had placed a previous claim on the Independent Comics name, forcing Knappe and Floyd to start from scratch in establishing this corporate identity after having published four issues of their flag-day title under the old banner. It was enough to make an entrepreneur cry (though perhaps not in purple).

The hero in Malibu (as Texas, however, and with typical Lone Star

by James Vance



Seadragon. They're working on getting rid of some of it that goes.

year 2000. As Thatcher's story begins, it's 25 years later. What's left of the United States is under perpetual martial law, commerce in some quarters has been reduced to the barter system, and violence has become a way of life. Hiding out in the ruins of ruined cities and rural bands of bad-as-monks men are the concrete, doing what humans to mutants and people do best. The "normals" who are attempting to hold society together have been forced to back themselves away from the centers in self-protecting armed compounds, effectively imprisoning themselves simply to stay alive.

One such compound, called Maelstrom, serves as home base for the series. Maelstrom is located in roughly the same geographical position as the real-life town of Columbia, Texas, but that's the coincidence ends. While Columbia is simply a pleasant little community, its post-apocalyptic counterpart is nothing less than a fortress surrounded by electrified fences and armed with soldiers, populated by the most paid by gun-looking men and women who carry large automatic weapons.

Former among them is series hero, Charles Fenn, appropriate nicknamed "Blatney," who is still one in a million search-and-seizure man in a world where that name has multiple bad connotations and

gets him flown to prison in the first ten pages of the series. You can't tell his age, though, and that's just what Hammers. He looks like huge Scott with Nick Fury's growing temples. He has hairier skin than the last of any comic who said of himself "by night." He is, in short, the epitome of the seadragon, graced with a cruel smile we'll all soon recognize in countless mutants and comic bookers. When he's not engaged in his ill-advised solo forays against the evening, Hammers commands a "specialty group" of mutated big dragons in the Easy Company/Holding Commanders division.

According to Thatcher, there will be a lot of happening at the state in comic. There will be much to struggle by inside from the Texas, Cuban and Soviet troops will invade the United States, making a south through Louisiana on their way to attacking the Gulf Coast oil fields and just to long things and things are coming with a quarter-century of domestic chaos, the name will find itself plunged into yet another world war.

That latter development, of course, is the reason for the series' title change. It also makes a change in the book's direction in the story line. Hammers, a dull away from the overly bad Hammers like Katoan of the Gulf Coast means, to be

replaced by an increased emphasis on military action. Things like space from them stories such as *Time* (Clayton), *Clayton*, *Clayton*, and *Clayton*. D. Taylor (Mr. Selver), Thatcher has worked out a detailed program for his future, says that should keep Hammers and others happy for some time, to come.

Thatcher is also considering the creation of several new characters. Some would remain the focus of new stories, others would be the ongoing series. Others are simply planned to provide a history of the events that led up to the big time (perhaps for a while).

Seadragon

The Seadragon series first appeared as a backup in *The Vision* Wave, spawning off into its own title after only three such appearances. Perhaps due to the fact that they are the only books completely owned by the company (as opposed to the others), these two have enjoyed an informal status with interesting story arcs, sharing some aspects of continuity and even supporting characters. It seems appropriate that, just as *The Vision* Wave is undergoing a major new look, Seadragon, too, will be facing changes over the coming year. Though none of the modifications will be quite as drastic as those planned for *Vision* and friends, they are still extensive, combining cosmetic changes with a completely new direction in the stories being told.

As readers of that first issue in *April* know, Seadragon is actually Commander's Name: Kato, U.S.N. returns to an experimental underwater survival test maneuvered for the top secret Project Seadragon. As the result of a freak accident, the test has become part of Kato's life, granting him increased strength and endurance, enhanced senses, and the ability to hold underwater full time. Unfortunately, the test is also just plain ugly, a head-on affair of pain, stress and without phantoms that does nothing for Kato's self image. It's exactly that's done much for the book's sales, either, for what writer-publisher Dorian. We're often to introduce the character slowly after taking over the title. (Finn and Knapp really took up on it as the first indication of what the book is made up of, as much as the book's fourth issue, as we were allowed that the book was in the other "world" he had discovered. In

body. This process will continue for several more years, culminating in a story appropriately enough titled "Metamorphosis," in which readers will finally see the new, improved Seadragon. The most striking change will be the loss of the long-fused leg he has borne since the initial book, as he is replaced by some amputee, because of the fact that the further marriage between Kato and the cat. In future issues the amputee hand, they're also significant. The changes in continuity line, acknowledging the effect of a cap in the "film" through the story, he will also begin to wear a black bandage, in order to keep up that amputee grip.

The title's overarching history aspects will be considerably broadened, too. Very early in the series, the character was involved in a projected adventure in the hidden land of Mo, going around up in a war between its scaly inhabitants—while, by virtue of their similarity to the land, rubbed him of his invisibility every time they appeared on the page—had, in general, going through exactly the same routine as underwater character who just got going.

Before being discovered in the DC Talent Search, Dorian. He was trained as an oceanographer, and while he came to the book he brought with him a more realistic perspective than a relatively new in superhero comic stories. That perspective was at first limited to enhancing the realism of the background (and then there would be worked out the life story he had inherited, but behind the scenes, he and other issues were showing a new perspective that would get Seadragon out of the no-thing proved most underwater tales to tell him, by moving him out of the realm of fantasy and back to the surface world.

His first adventure there involved him with a band of ocean-going terrorists and an exposure to new, low-level, non-lethal, non-lethal, non-lethal. During the battle, he was diagnosed with an "impenetrable" effect, the effects of which have begun to suggest the upcoming changes in his physiology. It was also in this adventure that Kato first began to doubt of himself as a man of being a hero, rather than a freak. The use will become another, however, as a better trait. During his adventures in Mo, Seadragon was first active, then acted upon, occasionally caught off-balance in the other "world" he had discovered. In



Another cover from Seadragon

the months to come, he will need all the initiative he can muster as he begins a multi-part struggle against a worldwide terrorist organization operating under the now-famous corporate-sounding name of Cause and Associates. This will mark the beginning of more traditional—and realistic—adventure for the hero in fight, such as *Star's* *Blade*, a three-part set special employed by the Cause organization which Tim Ford describes with a grin in "sort of an evil Charles's Angels."

An ongoing cast of characters will also be introduced, spearheaded by the return of Kato's superior officer Brad Jeffers, the long-suffering government agent who was originally concerned at the link between the two company-owned titles. (Jeffers holds roughly the same position as the Blue Universe as does Nick Fury at Marvel.)

Future adventures will put the subject of Project Seadragon against that of Project Leviathan, originated by the MTT character who possessed

the principles that first led to the creation of Kato's service unit. As they down the road is a long one—land, China, reflecting the now-famous occasion to the People's Republic.

After a period of *Blundering Charles*—(D.L.), it would appear that *Star's* only here is a lot about to unfold on a steady course.

The Twilight Avengers

For any *Star's* most successful title, John Wiley and Barry Tishman's *Twilight Avengers*, although originally intended to be just a four-issue mini-series, will probably be renewed as a regular monthly series. Taking its inspiration from the current-looking they're real-time heroes and villains of *Pulp* magazine, with a healthy dose of Golden Age comics and pulp adventure thrown in, *Twilight* is happy with the way the characters are developing. Actually, it's not. Unfortunately, currently out with a



Scene from *Nightwing* #13.

of period archetypes—the hooded villain, the masked warrior, the talking pet monkey—but the characters have already started to stray from that concept. They're feeling themselves out as we go along, and the team having as much fun discovering what they want to do now as I hope the readers have."

One of the more distinctive things about the book is that it's tie-ins. Steve Chambers, is a lot of a screw-up. He has a constant and reliable weapon (mostly of his own invention—like a laser-beam), but he has no more idea what to do with than you or I, and so he bumbles toward his goals much in the manner of the very early Spider-Man. The concept of "on the job training" for a mystery man will ensure a nice part of the series.

The book originally had been planned as something like the more



in the "X-Men" style in which Update Graphics' Sherry Spaul, also by Wesley, was hired, takes place. "But when Cliff and I got asked out of it we said 'you know the X-Men? back at his own time period, I thought it over and decided that I could have a lot more fun by doing just this'."

Despite its bi-monthly schedule, *The Twilight Stranger* has run into some scheduling problems, leading to some speculation as to whether it could make it as a monthly book. Wesley is quick to promise that the bugs in the system have been crissed out, and with Talbot's recently having declined because of his ongoing job in order to devote himself to *Twilight* to comics art, no further delays are likely to occur. Wesley also offers praise for the skill and speed of new inker Bill Siquero, whose embellishments over Talbot's pencils will begin appearing with the third issue of the limited series.

The final two installments of the initial series will end *The Stranger's* quest for vengeance against the gangsters who crippled his father, although this issue's climax is not in the wearing of the mask. Though he prefers not to discuss anticipated plotlines prematurely, Wesley promises that there are plenty of issues left to tell. "We're going to return the pulp flavor we started out with," he says, "which means that outrageous claims will never be out of the question, and we don't intend to let the sight of the fact that pulp adventures are dead and forever past contented. But we're got something going here with these characters, and I want to let them have their last. As this point, the book is basically the story of a nice guy in a mask trying to help people out in the middle of the Depression. No matter how wild we may get at some of the stories to come, I don't want to lose sight of that one simple fact."

On the Move

In addition to the series listed above, a handful of other projects are currently under development at Dine, with tentative plans being made to branch off into more all-giant books as time goes by. Since this article was begun, Alan Frenkel has already lined up one other series, this time being now involved in sporadic detective parodies of operating series.

So look for big things from Dine in the coming months and years. After all, they are *True Faces*. ■



WHAT ABOUT THOSE BELOVED DC CHARACTERS WHO DIDN'T MAKE IT INTO THE WHO'S WHO?

By Carl Gavanelli

Who's Who: The *Definitive Directory of the DC Universe* has been an admirable effort, hasn't it? Looking at any random issue, one can easily appreciate the great amount of time and brain-cracking research that has gone into this project. Add in the oh-so-clever artwork by Steve Meyers, James Hernandez, Steve Rude, Karl Beyer, Penn, et al., and you have a slick package that lives up to its designation as a "reference directory."

But, inevitably, *Who's Who* doesn't give the whole story. After all, DC's been in the comics biz for over 30 years, and it would be impossible to squeeze a complete list of DC characters into a mere 26 issues. With the addition of many characters suggested from Quality, Fox, and Charlton Comics, DC has got just a whole bunch of characters too obscure—some might say trivial—to be included in *Who's Who*.

Well, as trivial as it may be, *Amazing Heroes* just has to dwell on the inconsequential. In that spirit, we're compelled to present this brief roundup of some of DC's also-rans. Hey, who was that masked man anyway?

THE UNDEADLAME: Karl Keller was a *Nightwing* wannabe, but doesn't appear behind the Iron Curtain. While working in a mine as a steel laborer, Keller discovered a motorcycle containing explosive Kryptonite chemicals. These chemicals gave Keller super-powers, enabling him to escape the prison camp and seek revenge on the first world that had allowed him to be imprisoned. As the *Amazons*, Keller was too powerful for even Superman. The chemicals began to take their toll on Keller's health, and he returned to mine to use his adopted son from a fellow convict. This whole weird story unfolded in *Amazons* Comics #135-137.

THE BOWTIE: The Bowtie was a criminal whose "slavish" costume enabled him to become Real High. This *Amazons* super power helped The Bowtie to terrorize Gotham City for a while, but Green Arrow and Robin put him out of commission in a mere nine pages, leaving room for a five-page imaginary story in *Amazons* Comics #141. The Bowtie returned in the *Amazons* #144, and was dispatched out there quickly this time around.

CRUSADER: Former police constable Don Powers was severely Criminally

a super hero whose methods were deemed too violent for him to join the Justice League (right, the same group that Batman's in). Crusader's



The Crusader blind, then dead.



Wagner, Wanda (6)

[illegible]

ALCALA, SILFIDO King
 APRENDIZA, SAL. Johnny Coker
 (3)
 ANDERSON, BRENT Nigel (pt.)
 Cinnamon B. Cinnamon
 ANDERSON, MURPHY Adam
 Spruce (4), Nemo Knight, Nemo
 Skull (3), Northwest (2), Northwest
 (3), Northwest Mustang, Black Horse

(6) Capt. Boomerang (8, Capt. Com-
m. Composite Superman, Dull Man,
Furber and 1, Flash II (5, G. I.
Babe (3, Blackhawk 1, Rocketeer 1,
18", Kaper vs. Kid Flamingo, King
Furber (2, Matthews, Wonder
Master, Mod. Quackdust, Runt (5,
Big, Bruce Flash (3, Solomon Green
(4, Thunders (2, Uncle Sam, The

[illegible]

(jr.) KRYSTO F.
GRACE, DO
DU URSINO,
DANIEL, Lath
HABERLIN,
ERWIN, STE
STRADA, E
SPANIER, M
EVANS, GEO
FOLLO, FR
FREDERICK
Jr.
FREEMAN,
Lester I
FRIEL, BOB
Roy (jr)
FRY, LARRY
GAMBILL, E
GJ
GARCIA, LO
AND (jr.)
DODSON, R
DODSON, R
Kenny, Dan

[illegible]

THE 1986 JACK KIRBY COMICS INDUSTRY AWARD WINNER



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MIRACLEMAN

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COMICS in review

I was talking to my friend Tommy Carlier the other day, and as usual the conversation came around to comics.

"The hero is not created by the masses," he said, "this great noble means by greater power. The hero is not a democratic figure, and can't be created by committees, or elections."

"Of editorial policy," I added. He looked at me skeptically and continued, "Time knows make themselves, trying their greatest graces as the fashions of their moments. Others are made, pushed by Providence into circumstances where heroism unfolds on them like a robe. As an educated man, I know you will think of the two great triangles."

"Then," I said, "Batman and Green Lantern."

"Actually, I was thinking of Superman and Bismarck."

"Who?" What comes are they all?"

"Then he floated in: 'Comet! I don't follow you!'"

I don't know how an otherwise intelligent man had managed to make a study of heroism without ever seeing a comic book. "You can be a little less vague, telling him about two-color super heroes who could flatter his little Bismarck with half their powers gone. 'The history of comics,' I insisted, 'is only the continuity of great constellations!'"

"Oh! How nice!" Tommy yelled, clapping into his old tongue. "What a kind find I've been! But can you tell me, lad, what comes I should try? Can you recommend, say, how fine men?" And so I did.

STAR BRAND #1, written by Jim Shooter, penciled by John Romita Jr., edited by Al Williamson, edited by Michael Higgins (Marvel, etc.)

Who's Jim Shooter? Been keeping himself? Bored up inside an editorial persona, perhaps. For the last few years his "right" cowardly hasn't suggested a guy writing from the heart. Creating comics because

they mean something to him. But now, as Jim Shooter, writer-editor, author has broken free. And it's made one of the freshest superhero comics in years.

He's had an odd career, this Shooter. Back when he was a newspaper, in the '60s, he wrote some scoldingly advertisement and character-filled stories for John Wheeler at DC; he was the first, maybe the only, writer to combine classic Silver Age DC plots with Marvel editorial content. Then he stopped. When not he surfaced, it's the early '70s, he produced some lighter weight but wonderfully convincing stories for the *Legion of Super-Heroes*, that time combining swaggy DC stories with some weird, quasi-adult P.M. angles. Then a war off to Marvel for some work, mainly on *The Avengers*, that wasn't much fun as what he'd done at DC but was certainly as useful and pretty sophisticated.

But then he became Editor-in-Chief, and he didn't do so much writing anymore. When he did, as on a recent visit on *The Avengers*

and the original run of *Secret Wars*, he seemed to have lost his heart. The characterizations were standard Marvel, the dialogue was wooden, the words were dead. Oh, the plots could be a lot of fun, but he'd never been capable of much more than that. And then there came *Secret Wars II*. It is... well, I don't like it at all. I thought the plot was completely phony and pointless, the writing pompous, cliché, and inflated. I thought Shooter had lost a completely.

I don't have much hope for *Star Brand*. Not only was I disappointed of Shooter's writing, but I was afraid the editorial version of this hip heroism would produce any real creativity. I was cynical, though, and so I read it. I read a few pages, then flipped back to the credits. Yes, Shooter was listed as writer, not just Editor-in-Chief. A few more pages. Back to the credits. Yep, Jim Shooter himself. Writing well? Now with a sincerity, a raw-edged originality, as far as for real human dialogue that I've hardly ever seen in superhero comics.

The key to this series is the main characters of Ken Comell—a bright but another young guy who works in a body shop, loves old-tech motorcycle riding, and has no idea what he wants to do with his life—into a super-hero. He receives a lot of super powers from an unknown evil visitor and... yes, he becomes a hero, but not mainly, not with a clearly articulated role in a power pose. Far in the air, full page

Ken Comell, of Jim Shooter's *Star Brand*, stumbles his way into heroism.





Duck may be Shoon's last cousin, and he shows some sympathy in his depiction of his relationship with Ron.



development from "Gone" in the *Keweenaw* Council you once knew... and former hero, I am... *Shoon*.

None of that crap. Conell works his way, sometimes comically, but he doesn't know how. He's documented, through some metaphors, how defense and left, sometimes art, he realizes he might cause more harm than good by meddling in with his powers going full blast. Shoon's character has two pretty neat, familiar words. No super villains. No massively evil crime kingdoms from which all corruption spreads. No day nights for an inexperienced Conell. The end of Conell's fourth issue finds him confused, depressed, hating his life, but still trying to make things right. It is from that state he begins trying. Shoon seems to suggest, that that becomes will grow, that as he goes does the story telegraph the way in which that becomes will flower. Ken Conell is an early developed a character in all have seen at a super hero comic book, he's not a character, one of these pseudo-anti-one-savior pseudo-heroes who are so much more to come up with. In fact, he's about pretty of doing when you first encounter him, except for the way he pushes himself modestly on his, more later. But as his power life unfolds, we see him struggling with his transformation, we realize that all

his actions flow from a consistent, but often self-contradictory logic; that there is a unique and real personality at the core of him. Another comic (flow loosely) and personally from the actions of that personality that a story that will never follow a predictable course. Like and like, it will always be surprising (surprising in the many small ways that really hold our interest just a long time, but in the plenty and quickly exhausting Shoon's character was that he never truly connects (even if he's). The great actions of Conell's character and the unpredictable of the story have been made *Ken Brand* an addition,

who happens not making opportunity for him.

Conell depicts reality from the other super-heroes of the genre "unusually" much in that he is a real hero, where in the classic comic book mode, rather than a spunky and idealistic figure of the type portrayed by Moore, Miller, and others. Conell just wants to do the right thing, make himself useful, and he's old to help people. That was the essential motivation of nearly all the old, ancient super-heroes of yore. The remarkable thing is that Shoon has developed a behavior and approving personality for Conell that makes such heroic urges seem pos-



Ken Conell is definitely adult in attitude and experience.

itely plausible even to the picky crowd, psychology-oriented comic book readers of today.

The basic conception of *Ken Brand* seems to be an interesting combination of elements. His origin story, inspired by that of the Silver Age Green Lantern, a powerful alien visitor, stranded and being stuck on Earth, finds a young man (usually lacking in physical force and control) on his own power against a mysterious force. As in the early stages of Green Lantern, this is revealed to be the alien and his mission, and he must grapple with the mystery of his own transformation even while adapting himself to his powers. There is a touch of Hal Jordan—the glasses, the glasses, the glasses!—in his own way, but (like I say) with great power there must also come great responsibility.

Like Lee and Miller on *Spider-Man*, Shoon is building a solid and intriguing supporting cast for his hero. But his cast is radically different from Spidey's is, in fact, so better than Shoon's can be had of the changing circumstances of mainstream comics over the last two decades that a contrast of Duck and Lee and Betty with Shoon's Duck and

Shoon. The development of Conell's personality through his changing relationship with his new powers—no making, no regaining, finally determining to use it through—where the early days of Peter Parker clearly in speed (though not in power) is not. Conell is already a different character. He's not an egoist, but a reject, not a committed adolescent, in fact, he's more a job that a friend. He gets love life, and he's definitely adult in attitude and experience. Ken, as with Peter Parker, his personal struggles and his super-powered adventures form a feedback loop, gradually breaking down the old self and building a new, probably better, one. Like Parker, he seems to be learning, in his own way, that (like I say) with great power there must also come great responsibility.

Like Lee and Miller on *Spider-Man*, Shoon is building a solid and intriguing supporting cast for his hero. But his cast is radically different from Spidey's is, in fact, so better than Shoon's can be had of the changing circumstances of mainstream comics over the last two decades that a contrast of Duck and Lee and Betty with Shoon's Duck and

Shoon and Beth.

Duck may be Shoon's last cousin, but he's the first couple of months of dialogue between him and his occasional "cousin" "Shoon" and the character, speaking of his "last-cousin" "Shoon" ("Do you want me to be your cousin?") "Oh, Ken... You should off!" (I realized that I was missing something it simply because duck Shoon is mostly done on reality in mainstream comics, because his experiences had taken me to the point of being unable to accept anything but plain, clipped storytelling, speech or flight of Shoon's power.) It occurred to me around the third issue that Duck's speech was suddenly feeling very natural, yet Shoon really didn't changed what he was doing much (except for reducing the number of "quack" a little bit). Duck, like Ken, had simply emerged as a real character, and every line the reader was hearing.

Shoon does some good, or maybe it's a perfect example of this. When the *Comic Annual* I might have added "Shoon" in the introduction of Duck and Ken's relationship. Duck is completely devoted to Ken, consistently available for domestic and annual services even though

Moore's refusal for making his point is *Watchmen*. Long, a tall, smiling, pulchre-conscious psychanalyst with a happy home, a loving wife, a complicated world view. But during long exposure to the hellish, diaphanous Rorschach, during a night-march journey through Rorschach's tortured childhood and bloody coming of age as a vigilante, Long finds his sunny outlook on life clouding over. (Did his thought-faring wife, his marriage remain? Finally, Rorschach's raw becomes his own.)

Moore's greatest feat in this story is his ability to make the progress look like deprecating commentary in only 75 pages. He does so largely through unassuming dialogue, understatement, and an air of avoidance of the kind of eye-opening confrontational scripting that most comic book writers would use to tell such a passionately emotional tale. Rorschach, the semi-autobiographical and martyr-minded cynic ("Watch, Rorschach, these are you today?" "In prison. Now—ah?") work far better to make his outlook feel and come from than any heavy conceptualizing could. And when Moore finally does look at what Rorschach finally does look at with the penicils, they come with such lyrical finesse and intelligent reasoning that all of our, and Dr. Long's, defenses against it fall away.

"Good in flight, swinging blindfold on these like under of violent new continents. Full darkness. All dark planet now under my feet and know what you know that makes them seem like babies in the night."

Looking at sky through smoke heavy with human fear and God was not there. The cold, suffocating darkness goes on forever and we are alone. Existence is random. No significant difference after death. The random world is just shaped by vague metaphysical forces. It is not God who kills the children. The road branched left or on your heart, turning its darkness to us, shattering them. We reject this, but in secret our design on this merely black world. Was Rorschach?

Moore's point of departure for Rorschach, a *Watchmen* *Question*, his vision glimpsed of moral absolutism, and/or vigilance of a black and white world. Dicks was fully sympathetic with The Question, obviously giving his character his own world-view. Moore uses a more complex world, but exposes the conditions of that world which might create the outlook of vigilante-Rorschach. In the process, he does what Dicks was never able to do: making us wonder briefly if that outlook really is the appropriate response to our society, to the sort of us really are. As Rorschach says, simply two seconds and one point to talk about reality.

Here, as in all the issues of *Watchmen* in fact, Moore gives us a revealing image of the inner life of a hero. He shares with Joe (Shomer) in *Star Spangled* a desire to go back to the roots of the super hero icon and explore the conditions that might make a normal man into a severely disturbed lone fighter. But his con-

ditions are as far from Shomer's as they could possibly be. Not Shomer, a comic book hero is still a hero, driven by essentially good, noble urges. For Moore, a super hero has got to have something wrong with him. When a scientist is killed and transformed into the nuclear-powered doctor Manhattan, he loses his emotional humanity, even a normal sense of time and an inability to appreciate other human as beings beyond himself. What would have a normal person use into a nuclear vigilante, a violent element of a corrupt society? Only a horrific childhood, a dysfunctional personality. And the fact of being a hero does nothing to mitigate that last humanity or ease the pain of that upbringing. There is nothing adequate or reasonable in Moore's story.

Moore's perspective is that of an adult looking back on the facets of his childhood comics and finding them absurd. But rather than dismissing them and moving on to other media or other games, rather than exploiting their appeal to children commercially, he pokes and prods and dissects those facets to discover the source of the serious power they work on us despite their absurdity. Rorschach is the supreme comic for did superhero fans, bored by the conditions of the genre but still wanting to push those colorful contradictions out of our lives. It's a pretty subtle process, unlikely to reach people unaccustomed to super heroes or being too head-on into the medium. But for those of us who already have



Watchmen Long, the psychiatrist, finds his sunny view of life clouding over as he confronts Rorschach.

The haunted, despondent Rorschach is the star of *Watchmen* #6.



those lenses filtering through the dark corners of our minds. *Watchmen* is a powerful and disturbing revelation.

I will find myself disoriented with Moore in some ways. Every man is a while he flashes a little self-indulgence that makes me uncomfortable. But it is a position sure to write his own ticket in the comic book world, and I hope he doesn't see it as a role to play only he wants to see. The end back up in *Watchmen*, for example, with good and useful at first, giving us background on the character in an interesting way although they did drift about latest depiction of him of Americans which Moore didn't do very convincingly, but the essay on power com-

ics in issue #5 describing in detail a group of comic bookers that was popular in the *Watchmen*'s world but unknown in our own seemed like Moore's efforts to make some personal statement, while the file on Rorschach in issue #6 only really recapitulates the contents of the story.

These back-ups don't really hurt anything, of course (unless you find the confusion to read the back-up in issue #6 before the story), but they're a nuisance since they make Moore's universal critical analysis might be tempting him to narrate about whatever amuses him at the moment, or the assumption that it's bound to be accepted unquestioningly by his readers.

I sense a certain ambivalence in this series, too. What have the one issues of *Watchmen* amounted to? There seems to be no forward momentum, only a series of single-page profiles of the various heroes. Of course, maybe that's what it's meant to be, but I was lead to believe by them in the first couple of issues that by the advancing issues based on the back-cover credits that the series would be advancing toward a climax. The writing in each issue is brilliant enough to keep us thrilled, but I doubt that it counts like this will leave us ultimately satisfied. I hope Moore doesn't come to rely solely on his ability to construct powerful scenes and write eloquent lines while neglecting the search of

There is trouble on the city's streets.
To some, its name is

SAFARI



URBAN / SF / NEWAVE / ADVENTURE
Look for it monthly from — who else?



And finally, Kinski's new devices to see

his story is a whole.

Oh, but what the hell. That's the compelling thing *Mitsushima* can't draw for. Even if Moore continues just as he is, we'll at least have been treated to some of the most spectacular effects, most gripping moods, most chilling black humor any readers has to offer. And that's something that comes here over again in below.

Moore has also nearly given us a most attractive, semi-professional, more legitimate-looking package. DC's Art Damico, Richard Browning is doing what nobody has ever done before: Applying the design sensibilities and cover-art philosophy of book publishers, "real" publishers, to comic books. Book gold ideas (with the exception of the paperback losses of the 1970s, famed for their cheapness) have never felt obligated to junk the most thrilling, sensational scenes out of the book and plaster it on the cover. Some art parts, abstract designs, other art parts, not where literally from the book but evocative of its content or tone. Look at the beautiful *Village* editions of William S. Burroughs' books. Or the covers of *The Sound and the Fury* we don't see here, showing his name with a housewife or being something a little girl, but only a small green cemetery in the light of sunset, which captures the book's message of desecration and death perfectly. For super-hero-comics, even as their stories and best-selling, have never raised their own-story straight from the streets

or portraits of the heroes in such bare prose.

Writing his books through to end, book style packaging, and has done so in great detail. The back cover, with the *Flowing Island* and the ticking clock, gives *Mitsushima* a backbone of visual continuity and meaning. And the book cover, which Dave Gibbons has helped to reinvigorate, never loses sight of the action within but always suggested details that draw out the heart and soul of the story. A happy-face button (spotted) is placed, a statue in the back, and now a picture of a dead dog (up with you it's a butterfly, but what else do you know?). Such an officer and ambitious project as *Mitsushima* deserves this kind of dignified and thoughtful treatment from its publisher.

Mitsushima provides an interesting counterpoint to *Runes* this month. Moore is doing something similar with both series. Exploring the making of a super hero, the strange events that might make a man such an extraordinary being, and the effect they might have on his inner life. But *Mitsushima* comes off a little better than the *Runes*—if nothing else, he carries his super-heroism seriously with dignity, and seems happier as the god-like hero than as the lone Mickey Mouse. But there is a big question to *Mitsushima* as well, a name that his powers have opened a gap between him and mankind that will gradually widen until it's unbridgeable. So he, too, has yet to see his power in any

not heroic crisis, in fact, concentrated on personal matters. Still, writing his own adventures in prose, showing his progress with, telling his end and cause. His old days as a world-over hero turned out to be part of an ancient infinite dream, and Moore has yet to show us how that will affect *Mitsushima*'s attitude toward his role in the world.

Now a new enemy element has been introduced. *Mitsushima*'s own, the ultimate son of Dr. Genghis's insane experiments. Moore and Wright do a good job of building in a sense of war and mystery with a five-page sequence to graphic and accurate read) on the front, showing it quickly handling the memories of Genghis's horror and bringing *Mitsushima* back down to human normalcy. This, too! Moore shows a last page which as in that previous great sequence to come.

This isn't a top-notch Moore issue. After the savage memory of the Genghis wrap-up he seems to be moving off, catching his breath and giving a couple of necessary plot developments out of the way, it feels like a just a matter of finding his footing, now that he's moving on to new territory with *Mitsushima*. *Mitsushima* for the first time in years, before ending into another great sequence. Combined with *Runes*, the work lacks rhythm and power (the plot feels loose, the whole work lacks atmosphere and a dominating force, Wright and Wright's art, too, lacks the depth and



Our readers don't know how much of this unprovoked and unendurable ugliness hell want to read.

filtering the forces of chaos and violence into our lives, to "take back

the night!" There's a lot of moral clutter and in a messy, driving, cynical, and cynical, nervous, unrelenting of our political system, our headlong lack of certainty in passing judgments and making decisions, our tendency to make our own judgments with our own eyes, our voraciousness of information, and to our conception make ourselves by turning away and hoping it will go away. In all this, I happened here, and I found his darkness for a bit working with Dennis seems to have brought a welcome anger out of Miller, seems to have driven out all compassion for those who're falling prey to and perhaps he displayed in his portrayal of junkie Karen Page. He no longer seems to be calling us to go to sleep and be strong, but to dwell on our system and its shortcomings in brutality.

One ray of light comes through this bleak world. Miller has set up a peaceful, serene, freeing the "angel" of Communism. Dan. Arriving as a new lieutenant on the Queens City police force, he discovers the first-riddled with corruption like every institution in Miller's hand and had to decide whether to give it to it or fight it. His wife is pregnant, so his thoughts are toward the future and now life, not toward the past and old debts. Like Brown's. Which he makes his decision, even though it results in a sense of home-crushing violence, a look like a healthy decision, and the violence seems justified. It's a superb reader.

on Miller's part, not only giving the story a decent human dimension, but giving a sense of the moral complexity of the world and the complexity of the world's origins and required.

I'm looking forward to the next three books of this series. Miller seems, but making them a little, too, I don't want to see Miller's own his images, or better what is apparently his own view of the world and the structure of horror. But I don't know how much more of this unprovoked and unendurable ugliness I'll want to read. And with Miller's enormous power over the emotions of his readers, with his good his stories among come back here today, I would have to see him looking so much into the "house" and important right in the heart of so many super-hero addicts.

I hope that, even if Rasmus is never able to escape this suffocating world of bloodshed and vengeance, Miller himself can find a little bit of that changing and release which he was able to give Dunder.

It's been a much greater pleasure writing this review, in which I found some books that I read very much, as opposed to the last one, in which I was disappointed in the last. I've always wanted to find strong and original work in being done on these two of the two coordinate, published by the "major companies", and the unprovoked but in me to sleep happy when anything breaks new life into the old super-hero genre. These three writers all take radically different approaches to these themes. Miller approaches the horrific

support, showing the lengths to which a hero must go to make a deal to the "right" world. Miller's plan is to make a deal, but making them a little, too, I don't want to see Miller's own his images, or better what is apparently his own view of the world and the structure of horror. But I don't know how much more of this unprovoked and unendurable ugliness I'll want to read. And with Miller's enormous power over the emotions of his readers, with his good his stories among come back here today, I would have to see him looking so much into the "house" and important right in the heart of so many super-hero addicts.

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Grand Amos is a Contributing Editor at the National Lampoon and co-author of two books, *The Brown Papers* and *The Comic Book Heroes*. His work has appeared in *The Boston Herald*, and other publications. He has sold a few stories to comic book publishers, none of which have seen the light of day yet. A side moment, he is working at *Blue Hawaii*.

MEET THE CAST

IT'S PRETTY RUDDY ACTUALLY... IT STARTED WHEN I THREW CLIFF'S HEAD INTO THE SINK AND HE KINDA GOT HIS NOSE STUCK IN IT. I'D BEEN ASKING HIM TO GET HIS HAND OFF MY NOSE WHEN I PLACED HIS HAND



JOE: The old-school writer who just wants to be left alone



JOE: The man your mother warned you about.



Robin: the outgroup journalist who is the best

Get ready for OPEN SEASON, coming in December from Renegade.

DOC'S BOOKSHELF

The Adventure Continues

Welcome to the first issue of "Doc's Bookshelf," the *Amazing News* edition. With my foot on it, this will be a continuing column covering the weird, the wacky, and the generally off-road action of the comics field and related areas. The editors tell me I have a pretty fair hand for making myself heard, so expect anything from quick reviews to generalizing. A lot of gyping.

Before we do anything else, I probably owe you an explanation of my column title. "Doc's Bookshelf" has landed up my column in the *Comics Journal* and other fan publications for more than a year so to even think about, and Kim

Thompson suggested I carry the column to this place.

The title goes straight back into *Derfner* nomenclature, where it was first getting started warning for the ill-fated and misnamed comic fiction of the day. Because my first two issues are out, I thought it odd to top my last articles as "Dr. Derfner." In practice, though, it's not only sounder protection but people began asking me if there was a super-five version. The real problem came later when my editor brought out a PhD and a large fraction of my comic-related mail ended up being forwarded to him. My editor asked me to stop pretending to be something I wasn't, and since I was sure

that getting my own doctorate, I earned the "Dr. Doctor" sobriquet. "Doc's Bookshelf!" However, he pointed from that day to this, long after the publication for a has been forgotten. The Column Title That Will Not Die.

Over the years, the guiding philosophy of this column has gradually been that as the comics field, the most useful sort of review for most readers is simply the comments and reactions of somebody who read the book. Your own comments to whether something is worth paying for your hard-earned life, right? Well, too bad with that in mind, and as Lois Lane once said in somewhat different circumstances, let's not what

kind of trouble we can get into today.

The Fandom Zone

Thinking about my early days in comics fandom has put me in a thinking of a nostalgic mood. And by a twist of fate it lately landed as my in a short *Newsweek* comic book, I came across a history of comics fandom not too long ago, hidden away behind other news, smogged, and otherwise shopped publications as the far corner of a set of dirty sheets the local comic shop seems to reserve for disappearing product. The book has obviously been out for a while but it is still in less common and more generally overlooked by readers and reviewers alike, so it might be worth a short look.

Back in 1980 and 1981, Don and Maggie Thompson, now editors of *Comics Buyer's Guide*, had a regular series called "Fandom Origins" in the *Comics Buyer's Guide*. The book covers the history of comic fandom year by year through 1979. Since then, the Thompsons have gone on in other things and were probably as surprised as anyone when the volume was reprinted and published as a \$13.95 a year or two back.

What's really surprising is how terrible the production values are. The cover is an amateurish black and white cartoon with a sloppy lettered word balloon and no cover art, and the book's title, *The Fandom Zone*, is close to unrecognizable. There is no list on the cover as to what the book is about about, inside. There is no index, the table page is just a reproduction of the cover, poor and all. I would guess that the book was published by the Malibu-based family of magazines and captions are available from the current *Comics Buyer's Guide*, but that's asking in the book itself to tell you that. The last giveaway to how much of a no-brainer the book's production was is the fact that its pages were that clearly from the original *Comics Buyer's Guide*. The guys who constructed it, using old addresses for Don & Maggie Thompson and the then-current address of *Comics Buyer's Guide*, Richard Hovell and Carol Kishel (who have also gone on to other things, and his upcoming issue of *Comics Buyer's Guide* that appeared five years ago, and have also for proposed but Schuster magazine that never did appear).

Since the Don & Maggie material didn't quite fill the book, the last few pages are taken up with a thoroughly

streamlined article by Carol Kishel, "Why 'Fandom Don't Read Comics'." (I'll use my own words that if I've ever written the same answer to the question she did—helps and gifts have, infinitely different thought patterns, so they like the guy who can't come deliver so much money with as men private paper, composed mainly of people who used it mostly as a place to socialize with their like-minded friends, often with little contact with what had made them love in the first place. It was in the '60s that comics fandom really took off and comic fans came into their own. They used the comic-book industry with their comic shops, developed distribution systems, and ultimately publications. After all, comic books were in serious trouble in the late '60s and early '70s circulation was declining steadily, most outlets were dying up, and many knew I'd already people predicted they would eventually go the way of the Big Red Book. That's a damn' happen that my was entirely due to the efforts of a lot of fans who loved comic books.)

But if the *Fandom Zone* is overpriced and sloppily put together, does that mean it's going to be the only place where a lot of the information it contains has been written down. For anyone with an interest in the origin and development of comic fandom, the book is indispensable.

Don & Maggie were there in the early '60s when changing circumstances had with a little success as comic fans met up with professionals whose attitude was comic fans and terrorism, and pushed forward to start what we now know as comic fandom. Don & Maggie published the first comic fanzine and their later newsletter, the *Comic Bookers*, was arguably a distant ancestor of the publication you now hold in your hands. Don & Maggie were on hand when it all happened and I don't think of anyone better qualified to write the story. It's just too bad that it appeared as such

wretched form.

Comics by volume, year by year, the Thompsons tell you what comics books were being sold, and which ones were most popular, the conventions that were held, the major features of the day, and which fans were most prominent. For

many fans now, who may not have been born then, it's perhaps of the same kind of historical interest. During its first decade, comics fandom was basically a new little hobby, possibly doomed to end up like the comically ill-fated *Science Fiction* fanzine. After all, comic books were in serious trouble in the late '60s and early '70s circulation was declining steadily, most outlets were dying up, and many knew I'd already people predicted they would eventually go the way of the Big Red Book. That's a damn' happen that my was entirely due to the efforts of a lot of fans who loved comic books.)

The way all after the cut-off point as the Thompsons book, of course, and one of those days, comic fans will have to write a good history of this. But for an account of the early days of comic fandom, the story of how a all came about in the first place, Don & Maggie Thompson's *The Fandom Zone* is the only source of information as readily as gold.

A Last Book

On October 30, ABC is a significant of *The Mask*, an historical retrospective series, concentrating on the history of the comic book industry, from the early days of the comic book to the present.

The *Fandom Zone*, an indispensable book for anyone interested in the origin and development of comic fandom. Too bad it's in such wretched form.



of their highly *Pendulum* Classics Library comic digests. *How to Survive Pendulum's* current Classics *Blackback* releases... (#70)

Did Gold Key Tell "Warriors over do in adaptation of 'The Time Machine'?"

Do you mean the cover of *Scenic* like it would have been a chance candidate for these "Master Classics" series. But a comic adaptation of George Eliot's *The Time Machine* was never done. I must confess the *Classics Illustrated* book version of the 1950s novel drawn by the great Les Cottrell in 1958 since it's one of my favorite comics from my childhood. *Classics Illustrated* is currently a very successful series. Another adaptation appeared 20 years later in *Marvel Classics #1*... and there was also one of these *Pendulum Digest* editions for this book.

● David Durango-Toronto, Ontario

I collect war comics and I've read ones from the '60s to the present. Two of the best series I've read were from *Charlton* in the early '70s. Can you tell me about *Wild Front*, who wrote *The Iron Captain* and *The Lusty War of Billy Chalk*?

I have all the war comics from EC, DC, and Marvel but none of *Charlton's*. Though I frequently hear that *Wild Front's* *The Iron Captain* and *Billy Chalk* are the best of war comics. I've read even the modern issue in which *Charlton's* these ships appeared. I can find no further data on a *Wild Front*. Anyone else?

● Mark David Dittz-New York, NY

Can you tell me who *Mike Ross* is? His signature is on the second story in *Jet Fighters #7*, "Spunk Squadron." Ross is not listed in *Jet Fighters* White Box.

No one named! That's an early team-up of the great duo of Mike Espinosa and Ross Adams. They were that phenomenon on a few of their first collaborations in the early '50s. In fact, they once owned C's their own comic book company they called "Mike Ross Publications." I've pointed out how young cartoonists could be their own publishers with war series in the early '50s, but that was the case of this company. During 1950 they published (and drew) some really funny books, *Warrior*, *Get Lost* (issues #1-4), *More and More* #1 and 2, *3-2-1 Love* #1, and *3-2-1 Romance* #1. Much later for *Jet Fighters*, he's also used the pseudonyms of "Mickey Dennis" and "Jim Gustafson."

● David Smith-Baltimore, Ontario

Pendulum Classics, *Exile*, *Marginalia*, *Blazing Combat*, *Jet Fighters*, *Just*, *Gothic*, *Normal*, *Frontiers*, *The Sports*, *Comic*, *Adventure*, and *Chick* did *Warrior* publish any other magazines with comic strips?

Yes, good question. But you could miss any more *Warrior* that had some real nice comic strip adaptations of famous authors. *Blazing Combat* #1 featured "The March" by *Billy Wilder*, #2 had "The Whining Hand" by *Joe Orlando*, and #3 had "Cry of Premonition" by *Orlando*. You came to know that why don't you read the rest of *Warrior's* film magazine which just might have had a comic strip or two hidden in these numbers or other. Although it would probably have been a big deal. But there was *Warrior*.

● Eric Winkler-Gastonia, CA

Have *Scorpius* and *Shrek* got over yet? If not, could you tell me now, eh?

Monsters of Evil, *Scorpius*, *Shrek*, *Monsters*, *Monsters*, *Monsters*, and *On the Edge* (issue #10). In the last year or two, *Warrior* started publishing *Shrek* where other sites have like *Warrior* magazine, *Warrior* magazine editions, and a few more terms like *Shrek* (is magazine devoted to some editions of the famous *Shrek* tales).

● MARK WHITE-Pittsburgh, PA

I have two near-identical copies of *Star Spangled Comics #128*, but the inside back cover ads are different. Can you explain that?

No! I'm still trying to figure out why my near-identical copy of *Star Spangled Comics #128* has a *Star Spangled Comics* cover where some editions had a full-page ad strip with copies of the same edition had an ad on that page. This may be what is the case with your *Star Spangled*. Though I never knew EC had different editions like this. On the other hand, but many of us would have been interested enough to notice it in the first place. A few editions of this cover that I have noticed, along with that *Star Spangled* edition, include two copies of *EC's* *Impact* #1 which I have, one with a *Star Spangled* background and one in purple, and two copies of *Adrian Cooney's* *Super Cape* #1, one without a cover price. For the record, *Star Spangled* #128 has in this issue was a letter ad for *Star Spangled* and *Planet of Mystery* #1.

● JAMES McDONALD-Brooklyn, NY

In which comic did the original Batmobile first appear? Did it show the second Batmobile? Does the new Batmobile?

My all-time favorite first Batmobile appeared in *Detective* #44, though the classic '60s Batmobile debuted in *Detective* #7. When this vehicle rolled off a bridge in 1965, a new Batmobile style was unveiled in *Detective* #106. That machine was through numerous k's changes through the '70s and '80s until a new look Batmobile showed up in *Detective* #141 and then, when *Dark Knight* went off to college and *Batman* was moved to his graduation, the Batmobile was discarded for a more conventional auto-robot (1971).

The first appearance of the Batmobile



CARTOONS by STEVE LAFLER

DOG BOY



It's the middle of the night. Everyone went to bed hours ago, except you. Cloaked in a delicious nocturnal privacy, you're finally free to pursue all sorts of arcane knowledge, perverse streaks of license tones. Yeah, it's moments like these that you're glad you subscribe to *Dog Boy*.

Of course, if you are not a *Dog Boy* subscriber, there's no time like the present to become one. Use the reason now or you may find yourself upset upon by dozens of wiggly, silly captions emanating from your sheets, pillow cases, undergarments et al.

Quick! Save me this this hard-to-find! Please send me:

The first issue of *Dog Boy*. Enclosed you'll find \$2.95 (\$2.50 outside the U.S. - includes postage).

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Address _____
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State _____ Zip _____
Send to: *Dog Boy*, 1309 Cornell Rd., Agoura, CA 91301

CRITTERS: A GREAT NEW TRADITION IN FUNNY-ANIMALS!

Every month, **Critters** continues to present the best and the brightest cartoonists working in the funny-animal field. Just look at what we've lined up for the next three issues:

CRITTERS #11 (December, 1986) is our special double-sized Christmas issue, with a big **sixty-three** pages of great funny-animal antics! This issue includes new work by all the previous **Critters** contributors—**MARK ARMSTRONG**, **MIKE KAZALEH**, **SAM KIETH**, **STEVE LAFER**, **FREDDY MILTON**, **STAN SAKAI**, **TOM STAZER**, and **TY TEMPLETON**—plus a strip by new talents **JOHN HOLLAND** and **RON WILBER**, all under a new cover by **KEN MACKLIN**!

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CRITTERS #13 (February, 1987) re-introduces **FREDDY MILTON's** "Gnuif" series, with a romance taking place in the 1800s! Also in this issue, the exciting continuation of "Birthright," and "The Origin of Surfing" by **MARK ARMSTRONG**!

...and coming up in **CRITTERS #14**

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